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### FATE AND FREEDOM.

BY WILLIAM H. KIMBALL ("Theron Gray").

Fundamental to all correct thought are certain ruling principles, that, either consciously or unconsciously, come to expression in efficient results. These principles are inherent to Creation, as laws of Absolute Being, and are threefold in form. This threefoldness may be termed the *static*, *genetic*, and *hypostatic* elements of Being, or Life. As a concept of thought, the first potentially embraces and holds, as a primary, indefinite Providence, all the possibilities of creation, and thus stands as the All-containing or *Eternal One*. The second, being essential to generative activity or creative outgoing from the *One*, involves the element of contrariety in the manifold, with all the sharp definitions inherent thereto. The third, being requisite to consummate creative order and harmony as a final satisfactory outcome to such activity, involves the element of all manifoldness in composite order—the *one in the many*, and *the many in the one*.

These are essential fundamentals of Being, because they are distinctly realized as fulfilling factors to creative experience, and nothing can be *evolved* to creaturely experience that is not first *involved* in creative Being. I mean by creative Being the involved Life or vital Providence that is primarily essential to all

appearance in material form and uses. Every form of use realized in our human arts and sciences is first an involved power, and thus a Providence in eternal Being.

*Unity* that indefinitely involves all, *Diversity* that contrarily evolves and displays all in immature conditions, and *Compound Unity* that harmoniously actualizes all in embodied or matured result, constitute the essential laws of creation.

In any work of art or artisanship there must first be given artist or artisan with genius or power equal to the form that is to appear finally and verify that form. The conception of the artist that holds the art-form *ideally* perfected, also holds in the thought, whether consciously or not, the material requisite to embody it. In idealizing the theme, he necessarily *thinks* material which alone can give sensible form thereto. But in this primary degree both supersensible and sensible form are so indefinite or obscure to all outward appearance that no sign of art is apparent in the *realm of existence*. Idea is buried in thought, and material, perhaps, in the chaotic depths of earthly indifference. Yet there is *being* to the theme in the potentiality of universal Providence, and more immediate being in the idea of the artist; but, as yet, no visible form. It thus essentially *is*, but does not existentially appear. Nor can it appear *as a form of art* during the labored processes of development. It thus appears in primary form—in immature conditions—but not in a way to reveal the conception of the artist and denote his real power and rank of genius. This final appearance occurs only when the material has been so wrought upon by that genius as to stand forth “the image and likeness thereof;” when material becomes glorified with the glory of the art-conception, and the conception *appears* in glory through material so exalted by genius.

. There is a certain delight and repose to the artist whose genius has projected and wrought *in the mind*, as a cherished ideal, an art-conception. But, inasmuch as genius is essentially social in its nature, craves sympathy and fellowship in its achievements, it will not allow its creations to rest in thought—to slumber in the brain of its possessor. So the *is* of thought yearns to become existent in form, and the artist devotes himself to the task of giving outward appearance to the creation that haunted his mind and impressed invisible form there.

Now, creation, *in its static degree*, holds and carries the principle of immutable law or method that amounts to *fate* or absolute certainty. There can be no deviation from the counsels of Eternal Wisdom. These counsels are manifestly all fixed and constant.

How, then, shall arise human freedom and responsibility?

If man were not invested with a sense of personality through rational discretion and moral freedom, he would be little more than stock or stone: at least, he would not arise above the animal plane of existence. Unless he could exercise rational discretion regarding the good, the true, and the beautiful, he would be no subject for an intelligent appreciation of "the blessed life" designed for him. Hence he *must* realize personality and freedom *to this extent*. And this freedom will seem to be without a countervailing power. So the experience of moral freedom delivers him, to this extent, from the grasp of fate, in order to endow him with spiritual personality by which alone he can come to the boundless freedom of Eternal Life. In this ultimate reality, law and liberty, fate and freedom, become one.

The constant truth is that all the providences of Creative Wisdom are in exact accordance with human needs; but, to become rightly related in use, they are not to be arbitrarily imposed as if man were a machine, but comprehended and appropriated by him as a free subject. In order to truly comprehend and appropriate, he must be trained, disciplined, educated into amplest manhood. During this educational process his freedom will be more or less misleading, involving rebuffs and pains. Fate, or the wise laws of Providence, will assert their rights against the freedom of ignorance, and thus bring distress; but it is all in order that subjective science may finally triumph in law and liberty fully accordant.

Fate, then, being understood to be the necessary rule of immutable law, and controversial freedom being the motions of human selfhood during its ignorant or uneducated experience, the placid reign of fate and the delightful reign of perfect freedom are sure to be realized by man when he becomes perfected in knowledge of the laws of Providence and heartily co-operates therewith, instead of mistakenly trying to controvert them. This co-operation and harmony are assured; for the truth that the Divine Providence is

ordered in exact accordance with every human need is to be realized in charming experience.

Let me try to make my thought duly impressive by analogy in science; for instance, the science of mathematics.

*Given:* Mathematics, and the pupil who needs to be master of its powers. While God's providence in mathematics is coeval with his own Being, the laws and principles that make that providence potential science are as fixed or immutable as God himself. They are decreed, fixed, *fated*. The law of relation between the theme and the pupil is not less august and stern. He must proceed to supplant his native ignorance or nescience with knowledge or science in order to become duly empowered and free. Meantime, he is free to choose whether he will stumble onward under the disabilities of ignorance, or intelligently conform to the rule of *fate* and partake of the wealth resident therein. He is thus free to choose; but one readily sees that this freedom is not absolutely real. For, unless it carries his choice in the right direction—leads him to pursue the subject as a devoted student, and thus empowers him in knowledge—he is hampered and goaded at every turn by the bonds and shafts of ignorance. Destined, by the good Providence, to be lord and master, he is not allowed to *rest* in a choice that leaves him in slavish ignorance. And this sufficiently illustrates the nature and extent of human freedom, under the immutable decrees of Creative Wisdom, in all respects. This *quasi* freedom is an essential endowment, for without it man would not be man. But it can determine no orderly issues in permanent results, except by leading to intelligent conformity to immutable law. Then fate and freedom become co-ordinate factors of life. Then Divine law and human freedom are perfectly reconciled, and act together as one. For all the providences of that law are exactly accordant with all human needs; as the air we breathe is fitted to the lungs, whose delightful play is responsive thereto. So the *master* in mathematics is free in his vocation, for in this special instance he has conformed his human power to the rule of fate, which is only another name for eternal law that rules mathematics. And the truth here is simply a brief outline of the whole truth of Divine and human relation, both during the educational discipline of Humanity and the consummated power of the Divine Humanity. Man is a free *agent*, but in no case is he absolutely or

*independently* free. He *comes* to perfect freedom in coming to perfect law. His activity here is charmingly free, because it is found that the rule of fate or law is full of Divinest providences, escape from which he would not if he could, and could not if he would.

Man is free to operate chemical forces. If, however, he tries to operate them without understanding them, he is stung and flayed for his temerity. His freedom cannot controvert the laws of chemical fate; yet, if he will only become a thorough chemist, thus bringing his action into accordance with those laws, they will be found full of beneficence, assuring his freedom and supplying his wants at the same time. The earth, with all its stores and elements, is given to man to "cultivate and subdue." Earth without and earth within are equally placed thus at his disposal, and become surely tributary to his blessedness through intelligent mastery and scientific alliance.

This being the index of truth in broadest sense, it is seen that all seeming hindrances and afflictions under Providence are only friendly remonstrances and hints, designed to prompt us to cast off the trammels of ignorance and weakness, and become empowered and free in the knowledge of the Highest.

If fate were only a mockery to our freedom, instead of being an aid and educational stimulus, prayer and all human efforts would be foolish and vain; but, as it is, they are emphatically otherwise. Especially is true prayer potent in helpfulness, for it stimulates a correct sense of Divine and human relation. It helps to poise the creature in an attitude of real dependence, and thus to promote those receptive conditions that are essential to human attainment in true knowledge and power. Nothing can be more absurd than to propose specific aims as tests of the efficacy of prayer. While true prayer can never fail of being answered, the answer may not come in the way specifically desired. Let a test-aim be proposed, and the whole Christian world unite in petitions therefor, and failure as to such aim would in nowise prove the impotence of prayer. Indeed, any petition whose inspirations were a challenge of unbelief, and an ambition to confound such unbelief, could hardly pass as Christian prayer. It would seem more like a pious throwing of dice with a hope of winning the game. It were absurd to suppose that the infinite Wisdom would bestow its favors upon prayer-gambling!

There are doubtless conditions of human spirit under the sway of perfect faith when earnest prayer will literally win a response in a result that would not otherwise take place. But this would involve no controversion of distinct law. It will doubtless be found a tenet of eternal law that matter shall be subservient to mind or spirit rightly disposed or qualified. Divinely qualified, man is appointed to magisterial sway—to lordly dominion in natural realms—but he will then know and acknowledge the Source of his power, nor will he incline to misuse it. The result of prayer will correspond to the state of the one who utters it. Formal petition to the Highest is not necessarily prayer, while informal spiritual aspiration is, essentially, prayer.

There are those who regard the proposed “prayer gauge” as a shrewd test of spiritual realities, who look upon it as a pertinent way of determining the value of prayer, but they only thus expose their own puerile estimates concerning fundamental principles of creative law. They show how feebly they have touched the problem of Fate and Freedom, and how poorly they comprehend the real relation of Divine and Human in experience. It is the more singular that they thus mistake when, throughout the whole range of the special sciences, it is seen that man is conditionally free to pursue—must constantly strive, “knock,” or ask, in order to achieve—and comes finally to achievement, and the positive freedom it confers, only by the recognition of law and conformity to its sway.

Unbelief here is not only confronted and refuted by “Moses and the Prophets,” but by all the realities of Fate and Freedom as they stand in human experience to-day.